

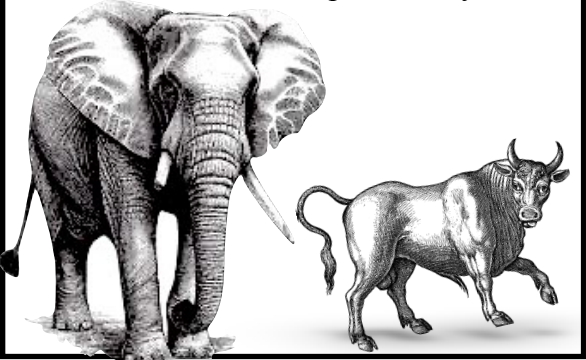
*Bull in a china shop
Break everything in sight
Get me started I can't stop
I'll have another bite*

*Elephant in the room
You ain't seen nothing yet
You can't take me anywhere
I'll take all I can get*

*I'm always on the move
I'm never satisfied
Boogie-woogie to the groove
Eyes always on the prize*

*I came here for a rumble
I'm looking for a fight
Build it in a century
Destroy it overnight*

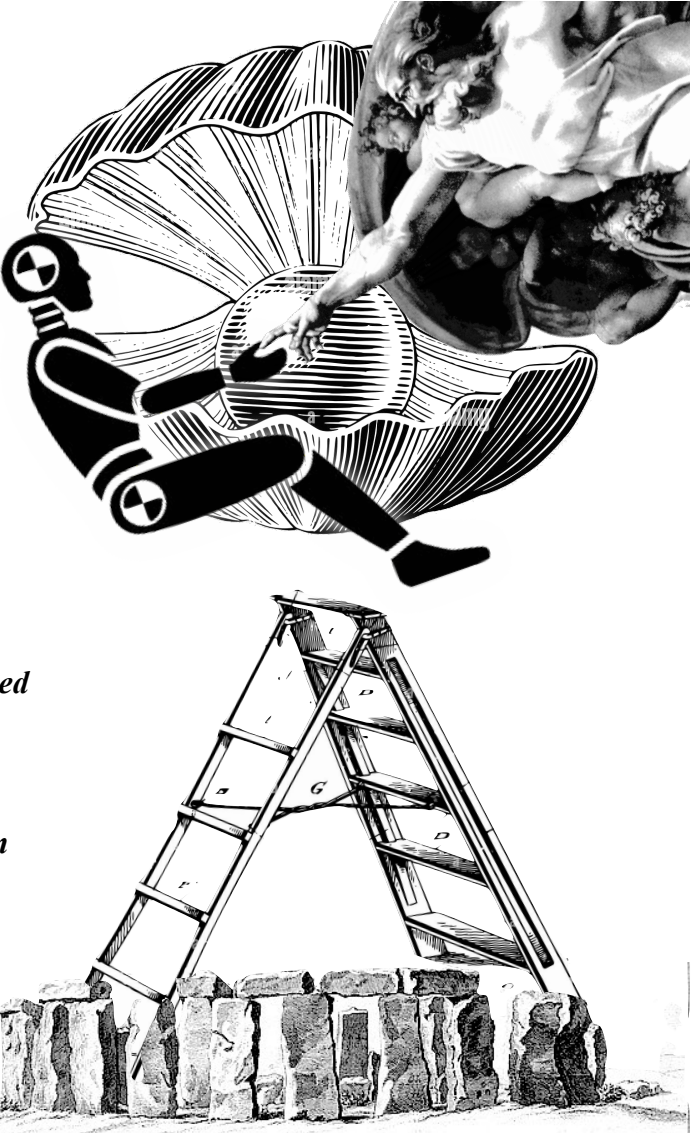
Tanya Mary Gaines,
Summer 2020
– pandemic year 1



Crash Test Dummies of an Imperfect God

*Because we are so stupid,
the prizes in Cracker Jacks are now paper
so they can be swallowed, ladders
spackled with warnings. No getting
within a hundred feet of Stonehenge because
everyone wants to hack off a souvenir
and the way home is clogged to one lane
so whoever wants to can stare into a pothole
until coming up with a grievance. I'd vote
the greatest accomplishment of mankind
is the pickle spear. God created paradise
to tell us Get out! which is why we probably
created God who doesn't much like being created
by ilk like us. No wonder it's pediatrics
every morning and toxicology by happy hour.
Is it all in the mind, the dirty, dirty mind?
Maybe God tried to turn you into a garbage can
so you could be lifted by the truck's hydraulic
arms and banged empty. Maybe a snow cone
so you could be sticky-sweet and dropped.
Maybe a genital-faced bivalve to be dashed
with Tabasco and eaten whole or, to his glory,
produce a pearl.*

~ Dean Young



The Proof of the Pudding is in the Tasting

On June 16th, a man who leaked classified national security documents to the press died at the age of 92 at his home in the San Francisco Bay Area. On Tuesday, a man who took classified documents to his Miami home that was also a resort frequented by a wide array of characters, refused to surrender them, and unleashed a flock of lies about the whole business, was arraigned on 37 felony charges.

We know that Daniel Ellsberg leaked documents in the hopes of stopping a war, preventing deaths, and exposing a government that had through five presidencies lied about that war in Vietnam to justify and perpetuate it. We don't know exactly why Donald J Trump absconded from the White House with top secret material. But there are no good explanations for those boxes stacked on the stage, in the bathroom and spilling on to the floor of a storeroom, and dragged back to another insecure location at Trump's country club in New Jersey, or for his refusal to surrender the material when the government demanded it.

The reasons to protect national security are pretty much built into the term itself. The reasons to violate national security vary widely. Whistleblowers such as Ellsberg are often high-profile figures acting on principle, not as enemies of the regime but as opponents of policies and as champions of justice or the right of the

public to know. They seek to hold government accountable, often out of a patriotic loyalty trying to make the government what it should be.

Ellsberg was a strong defender of Edward Snowden, who in 2013 exposed the US government's post-9/11 violation of privacy laws to spy on US citizens. Snowden was akin to Ellsberg as an insider, an expert and a man who made a careful and considered decision about both what to leak and how. There has, of course, also been a steady trickle of spies on all sides who sold intelligence to foreign nations for money or occasionally because they were seduced by an agent of a foreign regime.

Donald Trump was never a spy so far as we know, but he was a sieve when it came to state secrets and a beneficiary of leaks that seemed intended to serve exactly that purpose. In June and October of 2016, WikiLeaks dumped information hacked from Democrats with the apparent intent of aiding Trump's election. In 2020, a lawyer for the WikiLeaks head, Julian Assange, told a British court: "US President Donald Trump offered to pardon WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange if he said that Russia had nothing to do with WikiLeaks' publication of Democratic party emails in 2016." In May of 2017, Trump spilled high-level intelligence to the Russian foreign secretary and ambassador; in the memorable picture of the meeting he looks baffled,

and they look like the cats that just ate the canary.

Ellsberg, who at the time of his momentous act was himself in the business of national security and held a high-security clearance, handed over the Pentagon Papers to newspapers who themselves took huge risks to publish them. As the New York Times summarized it, the documents Ellsberg and his close allies so painstakingly and surreptitiously photocopied, were "7,000 government pages of damning revelations about deceptions by successive presidents who exceeded their authority, bypassed Congress and misled the American people" in order to fight an unwinnable war against a remote and impoverished country that posed no military threat to the US.

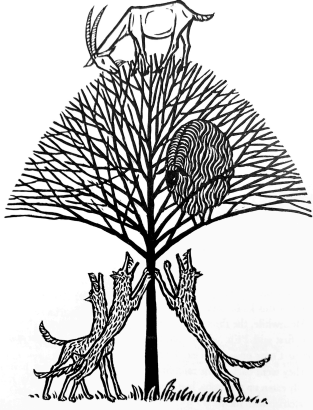
In an email in which he disclosed that he had only months to live Ellsberg reiterated: "When I copied the Pentagon Papers in 1969, I had every reason to think I would be spending the rest of my life behind bars. It was a fate I would gladly have accepted if it meant hastening the end of the Vietnam war, unlikely as that seemed." Later in life he admitted that his action didn't end the war, but it helped end the Nixon presidency, making an end to the war possible. He infuriated and terrified Richard Nixon, who used illegal methods to try to undermine Ellsberg. Those acts by a sitting president instead undermined the case against Ellsberg, whose criminal charges were dismissed.

Ellsberg devoted the rest of his long life to speaking up about the dangers of nuclear weapons and war, human rights, the overreaches of the federal government, and further wars including George W Bush's 2003 invasion of Iraq. He was a beloved figure in the San Francisco Bay Area, often seen at anti-nuclear demonstrations, arrested dozens of times in protest.

Ellsberg's death and Trump's indictment, so close together this week, remind us that national security is regularly violated, sometimes by idealists committed to the public good, sometimes by opportunists serving themselves. Ellsberg's life is also remarkable as an example of someone who changed his mind, his life and his values – he was a cog in the machinery of war, and then he risked his future to stand against that war and the government perpetrating it.

A great truth teller has left us.
A liar whose mendacity has no equal
remains for us to deal with.

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*There can be no such think as a "global village."
No matter how much one may love the world as a whole,
one can live fully in it only by living responsibly
in some small part of it.*

*Where we live and who we live there with
define the terms of our relationship
to the world and to humanity.*

~ Wendell Berry



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